

NEWS RELEASE

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007-2926
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:
Dianna Jennings
PRESS OFFICE
Phone: (602)-542-8019

SCAM ALERT

(Phoenix, AZ—July 15, 2003) Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard is warning Arizona residents to be wary of home repair scam artists offering their services to consumers who have lost their homes in wild fires.

Unlicensed contractors offering inexpensive home repairs and improvements are scamming many residents who have been victims of the recent fires. Many of these contractors stop by unexpectedly and say they have extra supplies they want to use up or claim they have been working in the neighborhood and have time to fix your home. These contractors demand cash payments for their services and often charge far more for their work than originally agreed upon.

"It's unfortunate that there are people who profit from the misfortune of others," Goddard said. "If consumers do their homework before hiring a contractor, they can protect themselves against these types of scams."

Here are some red flags to look for:

- Repair people who claim they are working in the neighborhood and have time to fix your house or have left over supplies they would like to use up.
- Repair people who offer to do a 'free' safety inspection of your home.
- Repair people who demand payments in cash only.
- Repair people who are unable or unwilling to provide references.
- Repair people who take a 'quick look' around your property then say you need a major repair.
- Repair people who can not provide a local address or telephone number for their company.

Consumers can protect themselves by asking for the contractor's license number and calling the Registrar of Contractors for information. All contractors who charge more than \$750 are required by law to be licensed by the Arizona Registrar of Contractors.

Consumers should also check the identification of all repairmen and inspectors to make sure the company or contractor that was hired employs them. Before hiring anyone, ask friends for recommendations, get several estimates, compare prices and check references.

Once repairs are underway, arrange to make payments in installments and pay the last installment only after the job is completed to your satisfaction. Most important, always get a receipt.

If you are not satisfied with the work or if the contractor is not responding to your requests to fix something call the Registrar of Contractors. The Attorney General's Office has a Consumer Information and Complaints line available at 1-800-352-8431 or (602) 542-5763 to answer any questions.